

Commonly Asked Questions:

Which Species are Best?

The species of fish that will do well in a pond depends on the size, depth, and inflow. Trout will generally not reproduce without flowing water. Additionally, they will likely not survive the hot temperatures of summer if the pond is not at least 8-10 feet deep, or has no spring flow. Warmwater fish, such as bass and bluegill, will usually establish reproducing populations. Although species that don't reproduce naturally require periodic stocking, one benefit is that the population is easily controlled and managed. Where interbreeding of escaped fish with wild fish is a concern, sterile fish can greatly minimize the risk of hybridization or establishment of new populations in public waters.

What are "Sterile" Fish?

Sterile fish are most commonly created through triploidy. The process involves shocking the eggs soon after fertilization to provide the developing fish with three sets of chromosomes instead of two. This prevents the fish from reproducing. Sterile fish are widely used by the IDFG to prevent hybridization (cross-breeding) with native trout populations. Extensive research has proven these fish grow equally fast, fight just as hard, and live as long as fertile trout. Sterile fish are a valuable tool for managing fisheries in drainages with fragile populations of native fish. Many commercial growers now have sterile trout available for private fish ponds.



What Causes Fish Kills?

When snow and ice block sunlight from a pond, aquatic plants can no longer produce oxygen through photosynthesis.

Instead, they die and begin decomposing. Decaying plants can rapidly use dissolved oxygen stored in the water. When oxygen levels become too low for fish survival, the phenomenon known as winterkill occurs.

Summer kills can occur in ponds with extensive algae growth. Algae, like all plants, produce oxygen in the daytime but use oxygen at night. If a pond has an excess of nutrients, algae can build up in the summer and deplete the oxygen at night, causing a summer kill.

Common sources of nutrients are excess lawn fertilizer, tree leaves, and manure from waterfowl or livestock.



Pond owners can minimize the risk of fish kills by installing aerators. Although effective in small ponds, aeration systems can be expensive. A less expensive alternative is to minimize the nutrients that enter the pond. This

will keep plant and algae growth under control and, in turn reduce the decaying material in the winter and night time oxygen demand in the summer. Periodically removing the dead vegetation that accumulates in a pond will also help reduce the oxygen use of decaying material.

Although herbicides can effectively kill unwanted vegetation, they do not remove nutrients from the pond and will not help prevent algae blooms or fish kills.

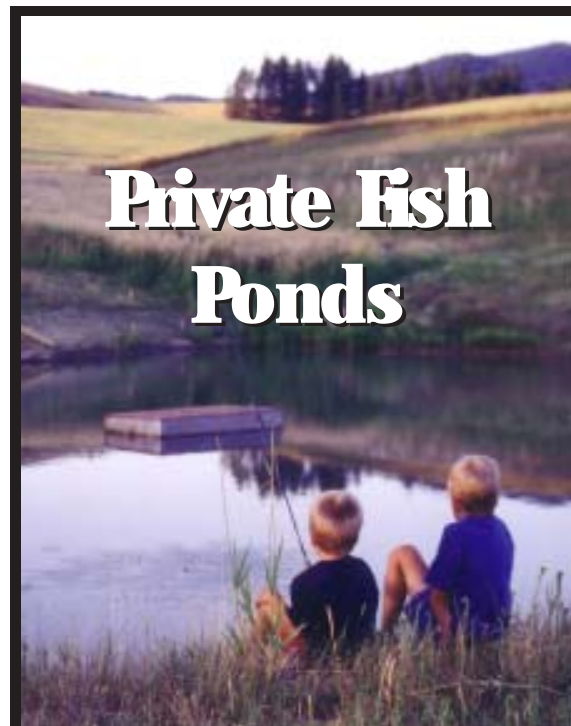


Where Can Pond Owners Acquire Fish?

Fish may be purchased at one of several commercial fish hatcheries located in Idaho or adjacent states. The hatcheries must be approved disease free facilities and must be licensed by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (IDA). Contact the IDA for the name of fish growers who sell fish to private pond owners at (208) 332-8540.

Under certain circumstances, pond owners may collect fish for their own ponds if they obtain a [Live Fish Transport Permit](#) from the IDFG. These permits, which cost \$21.50, will only be approved for transfer of fish that meet the requirements of the Private Pond Permit. Anyone collecting fish from public waters must have a valid fishing license and abide by the regulations established for those waters. At no time can live fish be transported without a permit. Contact your local Regional Fishery Manager for an application.

Private Fish Ponds



A Guide to Regulations and Management for Idaho Landowners



Idaho Department of
Fish and Game

What is a Private Fish Pond?

A pond is defined as private only if it is entirely surrounded by private land and is not located on a natural stream channel. Stocking or maintaining fish in such a pond requires a Private Pond Permit. Any lake, pond, or reservoir with legal access to the public is considered a public water body. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) manages the fisheries on public waters.

Why are Private Fish Ponds Regulated?

Private fish ponds have been popular on farms across rural America for decades. They can provide fishing enjoyment for kids and an opportunity for pond owners to create and manage their own personal fisheries. However, if not regulated, private fish ponds have the potential to seriously harm wild fish populations in adjacent rivers, streams, and lakes. Unwanted non-native fish species and diseases can be easily introduced to drainages through private ponds. For this reason, IDFG works with landowners to insure private pond stocking won't harm public fisheries.

In addition, a valid Private Pond Permit grants the landowner the right to apply their own fishing regulations to their private fish pond. State fishing licenses are not required to fish permitted private ponds.

What are the Requirements?

Any landowner can have a private fish pond if they meet three basic requirements.

1. A landowner must obtain a Private Fish Pond Permit.

Private Fish Pond Permits insure that the pond owner has met the necessary requirements for fish stocking. In addition, the permits allow IDFG to monitor and prevent introductions of fish that could harm wild populations. These free permits must be renewed every five years. The first step in acquiring a Private Fish Pond Permit is to complete an [Application for a Private Fish Pond](#). Applications can be obtained from the IDFG. Before the permit is issued, pond owners must specify the type of fish they would like to stock.



2. The outlet and inlet (if applicable) to the pond must be screened.

Before a permit can be issued, landowners must screen the outlet of their pond to insure that fish cannot escape into public waters from the pond. The inlet may also require screening to keep wild fish from entering the pond. Depending on the location of the pond and the risk of escapement, a Conservation Officer may inspect the pond and insure the screening is sufficient.

Most landowners use galvanized mesh screens in the spillway. The size of the mesh depends on the size and species of fish they intend to stock. Ponds stocked with fish that will reproduce in the pond, such as bass or bluegill, require a smaller mesh than ponds that will be stocked only with large trout.

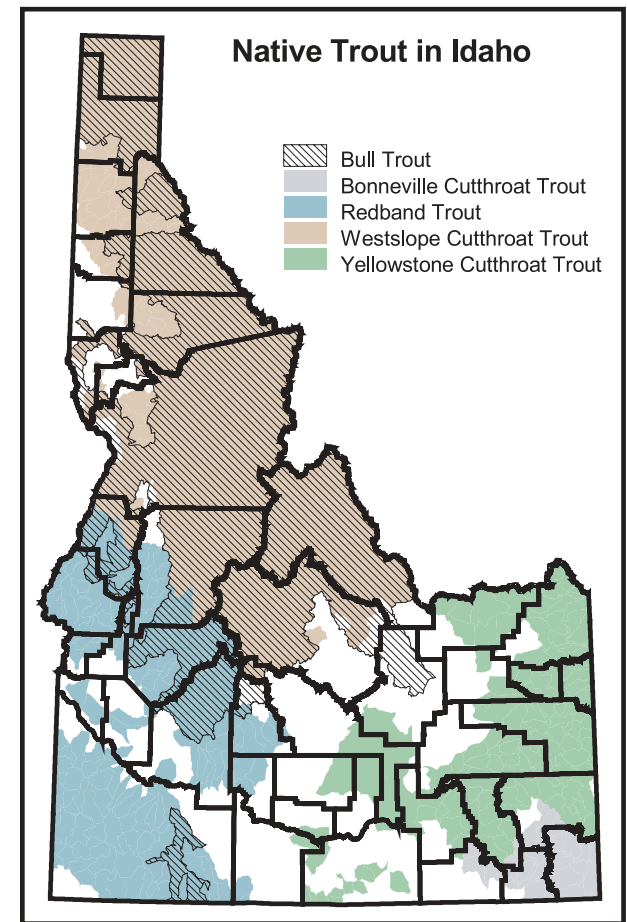


3. Only approved species of fish from approved hatcheries may be stocked.

Even the best screens may fail. For this reason IDFG only allows stocking of desirable species that are currently found in adjacent waters. This insures that new species aren't introduced into publicly owned waters, threatening native fish populations and public fishing opportunity. Additionally, to prevent cross-breeding between escaped rainbow trout and native cutthroat trout, only sterilized (triploid) rainbow trout or native cutthroat trout are allowed in many areas. If you live in one of the shaded areas of the map, you may be prohibited from stocking fertile rainbow trout. To prevent the introduction and spread of disease, such as whirling disease, only fish from an approved, disease free hatchery may be stocked.

Other Requirements

This brochure only addresses the necessary requirements to maintain fish in a private pond. Depending on the



water source and size of the pond, a water storage permit may be required. For information on pond design and construction contact the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. For information on water rights and water storage permits, contact Idaho Department of Water Resources.

For additional information or for private pond permit or live fish transport applications, contact the Regional Fishery Manager at your nearest IDFG regional office:

Headquarters Office—Boise Phone: (208) 334-3700
Panhandle Region—Coeur d'Alene Phone: (208) 769-1414
Clearwater Region—Lewiston Phone: (208) 799-5010
Southwest Region—Nampa Phone: (208) 465-8465
McCall Subregion—McCall Phone: (208) 634-8137
Magic Valley Region—Jerome Phone: (208) 324-4350
Southeast Region—Pocatello Phone: (208) 232-4703
Upper Snake Region—Idaho Falls Phone: (208) 525-7290
Salmon Region—Salmon Phone: (208) 756-2271